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## BOOK REVIEWS

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### A TEXTBOOK ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

He who prepares a college textbook, particularly one on a philosophical or religious subject, is fortunate if he escape the Scylla of didactic dogmatism without falling into the Charybdis of mere listing of uncriticized facts and theories. In his new book<sup>1</sup> Professor Wright steers a skilful pedagogical course. The reader is challenged to think for himself. Wright nowhere seeks surreptitiously to acquire merit for his own views under the guise of an "it is generally held" or "the modern view is," but he honestly and plainly labels them as "the author's opinions."

The method of treatment is empirical and inductive. The book is divided into three parts. Part I, "Religion and the Conservation of Values," contains thirteen chapters. It consists of cross-sections from the history of religion in its primitive and its developed forms. Brahmanism, Buddhism, the religions of Greece and Rome, Judaism, and Christianity are discussed; but Confucianism and Mohammedanism are omitted. Part II, "Religion and the Self" (four chapters), is chiefly psychological. Wright interprets the religious impulse as a sentiment; his treatment of this conception is original and suggestive. Religious growth and conversion, prayer, and mysticism are taken up in some detail. Part III, "Religion and Reality" (five chapters), deals with the metaphysics of religion. It tries to answer the question, Is religion true? It covers mechanism and teleology, belief in God, the problem of evil, freedom, and immortality.

The author proposes the following definition, which is historical, not normative, "Religion is the endeavor to secure the conservation of socially recognized values through specific actions that are believed to evoke some agency different from the ordinary ego of the individual, or from other merely human beings, and that imply a feeling of dependence upon this agency" (p. 47). This well combines the contributions of Schleiermacher and Höffding with the modern social interest. Oddly, the author does not mention Höffding's name; still more oddly, he states that he includes in "conservation . . . the quantitative increase

<sup>1</sup> *A Student's Philosophy of Religion*. By William Kelly Wright. New York: Macmillan Co., 1922. xii+472 pages. \$3.75.

of values" (p. 443) without noting that Höfding had already called attention to this same point.<sup>1</sup>

Wright believes that religion is true, and that Christianity is the truest religion (p. 212). In reply to the much-discussed question whether religious values are unique and autonomous, the author inclines to a negative opinion (p. 222); yet his conception of the religious sentiment as having a characteristic object, the agency mentioned in the definition, would point toward an affirmative answer. He should take into account Rudolf Otto's *Das Heilige*. The arguments for a teleological and moral universe he regards as adequate to justify faith. The facts of evil lead him to join what may be called the neo-Gnostic or Wellsian movement by denying the creatorship and affirming the finiteness of God (pp. 373 f., 437). Prayer Wright interprets as objective, in the light of the divine immanence (pp. 283 f.). On immortality he abstains from definite conclusions, but evidently inclines to faith in personal immortality (p. 441, cf. pp. 426 ff.).

Naturally there is much in such a book to call forth difference of opinion. Part I seems to the reviewer at once too long and too short; too long, in that the treatment of primitive religions and of Christianity might have been condensed; too short, by virtue of the omission of Mohammedanism and Confucianism in a year of grace when Islam and China loom large on the world-horizon. Resemblances and differences between Christianity and mystery religions are mentioned, but the burning question of how much the former owes to the latter is not discussed (pp. 119 f., 123 ff., 160 ff.). The psychological part of the book gives no adequate account of the social significance of religious consciousness; it suffers also from too much metaphysical interpretation which would have been more appropriate and more intelligible in Part III. Some of the usually well-selected bibliographies contain too many references to relatively ephemeral current literature, and too few to great standard works. In the philosophical part of the book the general arguments for God are clearer and more explicit than the definition and defense of the specific concept of God at which the author arrives. Perhaps this defect is a merit in a book intended to stimulate the student.

Typographically the book is admirable. Few misprints occur. "Capitolanus" (p. 135) should read "Capitolinus," and "Thomas Cokel" (p. 190) should read "Thomas Coke."

EDGAR S. BRIGHTMAN

BOSTON UNIVERSITY

<sup>1</sup> Höfding mentioned it (*Philosophy of Religion*, p. 11); Sorley criticized Höfding for neglecting it (*Moral Values and the Idea of God*, 1st. ed., p. 179); and now Wright rediscovers it!